

STRIKERS PUT BLUES BACK AT THE TOP

WYCOMBE Wanderers are back at the top! They needed to beat Leatherhead on Tuesday night to take over the Rothmans Isthmian League leadership and thanks to their twin striking force of Tony Horseman and Keith Searle, they achieved the three-points that puts them clear of the field.

The Blues are now the only side in the league with a 100 per cent record and the maximum 12 points. And with several of last term's leaders falling away, they could be in for a highly profitable season. It's early days yet, but the way Wanderers are prising open even the most stubborn defences, certainly augers well for the future.

We knew the Wycombe forwards were on form before Tuesday evening but the main worry was in defence. Six goals had been conceded in three matches and Leatherhead presented by far the most difficult test to the back four. But they rose to the challenge well.

Manager Brian Lee gambled with no less than four changes from Saturday's successful side, bringing in Flackwell Heath 'keeper Dave Wright for the injured John Maskell, Derek Gamblin for Ian Rundle, Ian Anderson for Phil Wood and Rob Williams for Steve Perrin, who moved to the substitute's bench.

MOST IMPORTANT

The most important switch was that of Anderson for Wood. Wanderers have failed to find a settled combination at the back so far this season but of all the pairs tried, the Bullock-Anderson format looks the best bet. Both are big men and strong in the air while Bullock's extra mobility is a real asset. The two players certainly made no bones about clearing the ball on Tuesday, hacking it clear of danger regularly.

On one or two occasions when they tended to delay the clearance, they were soon in

trouble. Both Bullock and Derek Gamblin were guilty of dallying before getting the ball away. The return of Williams was welcome, although here the Blues have another problem. Tony Brothers, Mick Holifield, Larry Pritchard and Williams

Derek Wells raced across and all but brought down Holifield with a scything tackle but Mick was able to get in a low cross to Horseman, left unattended near the far post. "Bodger" had time to control the ball and carefully slot home.

Wycombe 2, Leatherhead 0 Report by STUART EARP

are all playing too well to drop and yet Pritchard's talent is wasted upfront.

Of the four, Holifield has been a revelation this season. Again on Tuesday he was everywhere, using his speed to promote an attack one minute and then racing back to help out his defence the next. Brothers too had a good game while Williams' power in the middle made sure Wycombe came out on top of the 50-50 balls.

The strikers were deadly. Horseman and Searle seem unstoppable this term and if they continue in this form, even the tightest defences will be hard put to keep them out.

Both sides forced three corners in the first 15 minutes with Leatherhead testing the home defence. John Cooper overlapped menacingly but his long centres were well cut out by the defence. It was something against the run of play that Wycombe went one up in the 19th minute.

The goal was made by Holifield, who intercepted a weak pass inside the visitors half and surged into the penalty area.

Six minutes later, Wycombe broke through again with a vintage Horseman-Searle move. Catching the defence square, Horseman somehow stuck out a boot and sent the ball right into Searle's path. The centre forward ran wide drawing 'keeper Peter Smith before curling a shot into the net from a narrow angle. A superb goal.

Although Leatherhead tried desperately to hit back, too often they were halted in their tracks by referee Hedges from Oxford, who kept a firm but fair grip on the game throughout. The visitors had their share of free kicks too, but on each occasion their set piece moves were broken down.

Most of the attacking came from Wycombe. They all but went three clear when Horseman's deft flick found Holifield but Smith came out bravely to block the shot with his body. Just before the interval Brothers, who had a quiet first half sent a scorching volley over the top.

Brothers was at it again three minutes into the second half,

again catching the ball on the volley. This time, however, Smith arched back to pluck the ball out of the air, just as most people were shouting "goal!"

Two minutes later, however, Leatherhead gave the home side a firm reminder that they were far from finished. Barry Friend, their English international, made a swerving run into Wycombe territory and crossed for Doug Francis. The former Tooting man hammered in a shot which dipped over Wright but twanged the crossbar.

The Tanners brought on veteran Ron Fruen in a bid to enliven their front runners in the 50th minute but the chances they did create were ruined by poor finishing. Kelly, a midfield man last season, looked a poor replacement for Pete Lavers.

Fewer opportunities were created in the later stages, the match becoming a dour midfield battle. In the 65th minute Pritchard broke clean through but shot straight at Smith while centre half Reid, outgunned by Searle in the air, powered a header just wide at the other end from Friend's corner.

The one remaining chance of the evening fell to Horseman in the dying seconds. A pin-point centre from the overlapping Gamblin was brilliantly brought down by Horseman who dummied and worked himself a clear chance. Smith raced out and took some of the weight off his shot and Francis was able to race across and clear off the line.

WYCOMBE: D. Wright; D. Gamblin, P. Anderson, D. Bullock, R. Grant; R. Williams, A. Brothers, M. Holifield, A. Horseman, K. Searle, L. Pritchard. Sub S. Perrin (not used).

LEATHERHEAD: P. Smith; J. Cooper, P. Dade, B. Webb, D. Reid; D. Casey (sub R. Fruen 50 mins.), D. Francis, D. Wells; D. Skinner, C. Kelly, B. Friend.

Referee: D. Hedges (Oxford).
Half time 2-0. **Goalscorers,** Wycombe — Horseman (19), Searle (25).

ROTHMANS ISTHMIAN LEAGUE (Top places)												
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	Pen				
Wycombe	4	4	0	0	14	6	12	0				
Leatherhead	4	3	0	1	10	5	9	0				
Bromley	4	3	0	1	15	3	9	0				
Hendon	4	2	2	0	7	2	8	0				
Dulwich H	4	2	2	0	6	3	8	1				

Bromley in the money

TOP of the Rothmans Isthmian League, Wycombe Wanderers visit the leading scorers in Division One tomorrow (Saturday) when they travel to Bromley. With 15 goals behind them, Bromley are currently on the crest of a wave with three victories this season.

The one blot on their copybook was a 2-1 away defeat at Hitchin Town. Their victories have come against some of the lesser teams in the division but

the goal margin is nonetheless impressive.

They have beaten Oxford City 5-0 at home, won 4-1 at Corinthian Casuals and clinched another 5-0 triumph at home to Clapton on Tuesday. All in all Bromley have netted £120 from the sponsors this season.

INFLUX

The main reason for Bromley's rise to fame this season is an influx of about half a dozen new players, brought to the club by trainer Pat Tarling. Only four of last year's first team

remain — Miles, Deadman, Rains and Colin Brown.

Of the newcomers, strikers White, McDermid and Hardy have made the biggest impression. All three have hit hat-tricks already while other goals have come from Jim Brown and Collins with two apiece.

White, Grafton and Collins all joined from the successful Walthamstow Avenue side while Allinson came from Dulwich Hamlet and Ray Barbieri from Dorking.

Impressive though their record sounds, tomorrow will be Bromley's real test of character against one of the top teams. A £40 bonus is unlikely this time!

With manager Brian Lee on holiday, assistant boss John Reardon is unlikely to change his side that beat Leatherhead 2-0 in midweek. John Maskell is still out with an injured hand while Dave Bullock suffered a couple of minor injuries on Tuesday, but should be fit for tomorrow's game.